

From the Office of Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz

For Immediate Release September 20, 2002

CONTACT: Larry Perosino 860/509-6259

DIVERSITY OF STATE BOARDS TO GET CLOSER LOOK

With the release of her office's biennial report on *Diversity of Appointees on Connecticut State Boards and Commissions*, Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz said she plans to convene a meeting between appointing authorities and organizations mandated to advocate for women and minority candidates for elected and appointed office.

In the Secretary's report, figures from 2001 indicate that women and minorities, particularly Hispanics, continue to be underrepresented in the appointed membership of state boards and commissions. Provisions of a 1993 law (PA 93-424) requires appointing authorities to consider diversity, among other factors, when naming members to those bodies. The law also requires affected boards and commissions to file data regarding their gender and racial composition with the office of the secretary of the state every other year.

Bysiewicz noted that the boards and commissions perform a variety of important public policy functions including the licensing and regulation of certain professions and administering state and federal funds in areas such as the arts, economic development and environmental protection.

"The work of these boards and commissions directly impacts the lives of every citizen, and their membership should reflect as best as possible the diversity of our population," said Bysiewicz, who co-sponsored the 1993 diversity legislation as a member of the General Assembly. "The governor and the legislature share much of the appointing authority and I sense a strong desire to work together toward increasing the number of minority members named to state boards."

Bysiewicz will invite legislative leaders and the governor to participate in a meeting with the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission and African American Affairs Commission to begin a direct exchange of vacancies and qualified potential appointees.

"We all benefit as a society when people with diverse backgrounds and unique perspectives are encouraged to play a larger role in our democracy," said Speaker of the House Moira Lyons (D-Stamford). "It is important that we continue our efforts to implement a system that matches interested candidates with vacancies as they occur."

"We all need to be more diligent in making sure our state boards and commissions represent all of the people of Connecticut," said Senate President Kevin Sullivan (D-West Hartford). "By working more closely with organizations actively seeking new potential appointees, that goal is certainly attainable."

While the majority of appointments to state boards and commissions are made by the governor and members of the General Assembly, some are also the responsibility of state agency heads, municipal officials and non-profit organizations among others.

Copies of the Secretary of the State's report on *Diversity of Appointees on State Boards and Commissions* is available through the Records & Legislative Services Division by calling 860-509-6134, or by visiting the office's web site at www.sots.state.ct.us and selecting "Items of Interest."

##